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U.S. Says Managua Harasses Embassy's Nicaraguan Staff

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 12 — The State Department accused the Nicaraguan Government today of harassing Nicaraguan employees of the United States Embassy in Managua by subjecting them to hours of interrogation by state security agents.

Charles E. Redman, a department spokesman, said the United States had protested the questioning to the Nicaraguan Government and demanded that the practice be halted immediately.

Mr. Redman said 14 Nicaraguans who work for the embassy were summoned to the headquarters of the National Directorate of State Security for questioning between Nov. 2 and Nov. 7. He said the sessions had lasted 6 to 13 hours and had been "intense and abusive."

"All have been accused of working for the C.I.A. and all have been told they were prisoners," Mr. Redman said. "So far, all have been released but with warnings that they will be under surveillance in the future."

"We reject any claims that these employees were engaged in espionage activities," Mr. Redman said. "All are

employed in the normal sorts of support functions, as foreign nationals in any U.S. embassy in the world."

'Psychological Abuse' Is Charged

Mr. Redman said that the summonses usually came late in the evening and that those questioned were subjected to "psychological abuse" and "verbal insults." He said they were kept in small, windowless rooms, were allowed to sit or speak only with the permission of the interrogator, and were forced to walk with their heads down and eyes on the ground, accompanied by armed guards.

He said the 14 employees called in for questioning performed various jobs in the embassy and included drivers and office workers.

The formal protest note was presented to the Nicaraguan chargé d'affaires in Washington this morning by William Walker, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Mr. Redman said.

Asked if the United States was considering closing the embassy, Mr. Redman said he had no information "that would lead me in that direction."

Mr. Redman denied that the American protest was a form of response to President Daniel Ortega Saavedra's statement on Monday that his Government would not sign any regional peace agreement until the United States halted aid to the Nicaraguan rebels.

'Part of a Pattern'

Another State Department official, who deals with Nicaraguan issues, said the interrogations were "part of a pattern of activities common in East bloc countries."

He said the Nicaraguan authorities put additional security forces around the embassy a few months ago. The security agents, he said, routinely question Nicaraguans trying to enter the embassy or the consulate to obtain visas or inquire about such things as scholarships.